

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

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Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**PARTNERSHIP PROVIDES FREE SWIM LESSONS FOR KIDS, CPR
AND WATER SAFETY CLASSES FOR PARENTS**

Safe Kids Marion Coalition Partners Help Make Summer Water Safety a Priority

OCALA—The Safe Kids Coalition of Marion County is providing free summer swimming lessons to 100 Marion County children, and free CPR and water safety classes to their parents.

The program, funded by a grant from Kids Central, Inc., is a partnership with the Florida Department of Health in Marion County, Kids Central, the Marion County Children’s Alliance, the Safe Kids Marion County Coalition, Ocala Recreation and Parks and Ocala Fire Rescue.

“Strong partnerships make a community’s public health system strong,” said Erin Hess, Florida Department of Health in Marion County health officer. “With the community teaming up to provide these resources, more of our families will be safer as we enter the summer swimming season.”

Children ages 3 and up who have not previously received swim lessons are eligible for the two-part program. Parents must attend a CPR and water safety class on June 23 or 24 for their children to qualify for the swim lessons. A limited number of swim lessons are available and will be offered on a first come, first served basis. Sign up online at Marion.FloridaHealth.gov.

Once parents have completed the CPR and water safety class, children can attend the eight-session swimming lesson program. Lessons will take place July 6–29 at the Hampton Aquatic Center, 1510 NW 4th St., and July 21–Aug 13 at the Jervey Gantt Aquatic Center, 2390 SE 36th Ave.

“Over the past 10 years Florida has lost more children under age five to drowning than any other state,” said Meaghan Crowley, Health Education Program manager at the department. “By offering CPR and water safety training to parents and swim lessons to children, we can help protect the lives of Marion County’s children.”

Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional injury-related death for children ages 1–4 and the second leading cause for children and teens under the age of 19. On average, more than 1,000 children die each year due to unintentional drowning and more than 5,000 are seen in emergency rooms for injuries from near-drowning incidents.

For more information on the free swimming lessons, call the department at 352-629-0137.

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